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July 3, 2008

Ron Schafer, Chair
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
Temescal Gateway Park
15601 Sunset Blvd.
Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

Re: Support Public Access for All to Temescal Gateway Park; Oppose Private Palisades Lease

Dear Chairperson Schafer and Honorable Conservancy Board Members:

The undersigned members of a diverse and growing alliance urge the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to support public access for all to the Temescal Gateway Park. The Park is a crown jewel in the precious little parklands of the Los Angeles region. The Park was purchased and is maintained with public funds by a public agency to benefit all of the public. We support access to the Park for all through programs like Transit to Trails that provide diverse inner city youth and their families and friends with fun, educational, and healthy experiences. The Park facilities should be used for overnight camping and similar public programs for all. We urge the Conservancy to stand behind the decision not to renew the non-renewable private lease for Chabad of Pacific Palisades, Inc. (Palisades Jewish Early Childhood Center). Privatizing Temescal Gateway Park for groups that have political clout with the governor and resource secretary, and enough money to lease public park facilities, would be unfair, bad policy, and bad law. The California statutory definition of Environmental Justice requires “the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes.” We urge the Conservancy in the strongest possible terms not to privatize this precious parkland, and not to set a precedent for privatizing other public parks and facilities. We urge the Conservancy to support public access for all to the Temescal Gateway Park and facilities.

Pacific Palisades has 404.84 acres of parks per thousand residents, compared to .25 acres in Maywood, .66 acres in East L.A., .67 in Lynwood, and .78 in Compton. Those are not typos; the disparities are that dramatic. Pacific Palisades is disproportionately white and wealthy, compared to those communities and the County of Los Angeles. As a matter of simple justice, Palisades groups need to share Temescal Gateway Park with others. *Source: The City Project, Park Acreage for Cities/Communities/Neighborhoods in Los Angeles County, Chart 1203C, available at www.flickr.com/photos/cityprojectca/999450014.*

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) calls for increased access to parks and green space for all in the recent Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Environmental Justice Report. “Public parks serve all residents. . . . However, not all neighborhoods and people have equal access to these public resources,” including local, state, and national parks. “[A] multi-agency effort must be undertaken in order to further address and remedy the issue of inequity of park access.” One remedy, for example, is Transit to Trails. “Research has found a complete lack of public transportation services into National Parks, but this also appears true for State Parks. There is almost no access to national parks and very limited access to state parks by transit across all income groups” SCAG RTP Environmental Justice Report 11-14, 20 (2008). The SCAG Report is available at www.cityprojectca.org/blog/archives/750.

The Los Angeles County Health Department has documented that areas with less open area set aside as parks, recreational area, or wilderness area are more likely to have a higher prevalence of children who are obese. *Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Office of Health Assessment and Epidemiology,*

Preventing Childhood Obesity: the need to create healthy places. A Cities and Communities Health Report. October 2007.

Los Angeles overall is park poor, and there are unfair disparities in access to park, school, and health resources based on race, ethnicity, income, poverty, youth, and access to cars. Access to parks and recreation including Temescal Gateway Park must be improved for all ages in all neighborhoods, and especially in the most underserved communities. Los Angeles must have more and stronger programs like Transit to Trails to the Park to help children move more, eat well, stay healthy, and do their best in school and in life.

The City Project has extensively documented the unfair disparities in access to parks and recreation, and has proposed principles and programs such as Transit to Trails to achieve equal access for all. *See, e.g., Robert García and Aubrey White, Healthy Parks, Schools, and Communities: Mapping Green Access and Equity for the Los Angeles Region* (2006). The Report is available on the web at www.cityprojectca.org/ourwork/mappinggreenaccess. The Report analyzes the policy and legal justifications for public access to public parklands such as Temescal Gateway Park under the California statutory definition of environmental justice cited above, and other state and federal civil rights laws including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and California Government Code section 11135. *Id.* at 8-16, 19-22. We incorporate the policy and legal analyses by reference here. We urge the Conservancy to proactively comply with these laws through public access for Temescal Gateway Park for all.

Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne hiked in the Santa Monica Mountains with inner city children as part of Transit to Trails in April 2007. We have invited the governor and secretary of resources on a Transit to Trails hike with inner city children too. Additional information about Transit to Trails, which is diversifying access to Temescal Gateway Park and other mountain, beach, and river environments, is available at www.cityprojectca.org/ourwork/forests.html.

It is vital that the Conservancy expand access for all to Temescal Gateway Park to alleviate the unfair disparities in access to park, school, and health resources, and not privatize precious public parkland and facilities.

Very truly yours,

Asosacion de Fraternidades Guatemaltecas (AFG)
California Pan Ethnic Health Network
Cinelandia
Coalition Against Militarism in Schools (CAMS)
Congreso de Hermandad Centro Americana
Comite Pro Uno Maywood
Comunidad Salvadoreña La Placita
Cristian Avalos for Congress
Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana
Knights of Columbus
La Placita Church
Latinos for Peace
Los Angeles Gardens and Urban Farms
League of Latin-American United Citizens (LULAC)

Mexican-American Political Association (MAPA)
National Hispanic Environmental Council (NHEC)
Palisadians for Peace
School of the Americas Watch L.A. (SOAW-LA)
The City Project
Transnational Institute for Grassroots Research and Action (TIGRA)

(partial list)